



Blood Donors Help Patients Like....

18-year-old Stefanie Sacknoff of Rancho Penasquitos

Stefanie Sacknoff began learning the importance of volunteer blood donors before her first birthday when she was diagnosed with aplastic anemia, a disorder in which the bone marrow produces an insufficient number of red and white blood cells and platelets.

When she was eight-years-old she started receiving weekly transfusions and continues that regiment today. Although her condition limited her from taking part in many typical childhood activities, Stefanie says her illness has inspired her to set lofty goals.

"I want to be a doctor," said the University of San Diego freshman. "Spending so much time at the hospital while growing up, I've seen so many things I'd like to change or improve."

While Stefanie hasn't let aplastic anemia stand in her way, she's often concerned that her rare blood type, B-, won't be available when she needs a transfusion. She hopes that by sharing her story she can help raise awareness in the community about the importance of donating blood on a regular basis.

Stefanie is enrolled in USD's pre-med program and ultimately would like to specialize in pediatric oncology.

"I can relate to what those kids are going through in the hospital and I know I can make a difference. This is my calling."



Kameron Shelton and his baby sister Alice

Kameron Shelton has a lot to teach his five-month-old baby sister, Alice. But it's not only the typical childhood milestones he'll share with her; five-year-old Kameron will also show Alice how to cope with sickle cell anemia – a disease both children were born with. Sickle cell disease causes the body's red blood cells to function abnormally, resulting in small blood clots. These clots give rise to recurrent painful episodes called "sickle cell pain crises."

Patients with sickle cell anemia require transfusions to introduce healthy blood cells into their system. Kameron usually needs blood every three to six months and more often if he becomes ill. Since sickle cell disease also compromises the immune system, Kameron has to be especially careful. Oftentimes a common cold turns into pneumonia.

Although Alice hasn't needed a transfusion yet, she will most likely follow in her brother's footsteps. When the time comes, Kameron says he'll be ready to hold his sister's hand. There is no cure for sickle cell disease, so most patients face a lifelong regiment of transfusions and medications.



12-year-old Stefon Harris

12-year-old Stefon Harris was recently diagnosed with aplastic anemia and requires blood transfusions on a regular basis. He hopes to find a matching marrow donor soon so that he can have a bone marrow transplant to treat his condition.